HARMONIZING SCIENCE AND STATECRAFT A CONFUCIAN-MARXIST PERSPECTIVE ON POLITICAL GOVERNANCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

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Abstract

This paper explores the innovative synthesis of Confucian and Marxist ideologies within Vietnamese governance, offering a unique lens through which to view ethical governance and technological advancement. By examining the historical integration of these ideologies, their influence on modern policy-making, and their role in addressing contemporary global challenges, the study illuminates the potential of this fusion to foster equitable and sustainable societal development. Through a detailed analysis of Vietnamese governance models, case studies, and the impact on various sectors such as social welfare, education, and public administration, the research underscores the significance of harmonizing traditional values with modern socio-political ideals. The paper is concluded by reflecting on the future prospects of the Confucian-Marxist synthesis in Vietnam, highlighting its relevance for global governance and the digital era.

Keywords: synthesis, technological, advancement, societal development, global challenges

1. Introduction

The confluence of Confucian and Marxist ideologies presents an interesting case study through which the modern governance and technological advancement of nations, particularly within the Asian context, can be understood. This synthesis, which links the deep-rooted societal principles of Confucianism with the dynamic, progress-driven ethos of Marxism, has notably shaped the unique trajectory of nations like Vietnam. We contend that the more-or-less harmonious blending of these ideologies here is not merely theoretical but is vividly reflected in the fabric of governance and the rapid embrace of technological innovation. By examining this blend, we aim to illuminate how

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these two ideologies, or ways of giving sense to the world around us - one traditional and the other revolutionary - coalesce to form a governance model that is both ethically grounded and progress-oriented. The goals of this paper are:

1. to explore the historical underpinnings and contemporary manifestations of the Confucian-Marxist synthesis in Vietnamese governance,
2. to analyse the impact of this ideological blend on Vietnam's technological landscape and its implications for societal progress,
3. to assess the challenges and opportunities presented by this unique governance model in the face of rapid technological change.

2. Methodology used in the research

In my research, I adopt a multidisciplinary approach, as I attempt to weave together insights from Political science, History, Philosophy, Religious studies, and technology studies. Our analysis is grounded in a review of literature that spans academic articles, governmental reports, and historical texts, ensuring a robust exploration of Confucian and Marxist influences in Vietnamese governance and technology [1, 2]. Additionally, I employ qualitative analysis of secondary sources and technological initiatives to discern the practical applications and outcomes of this ideological synthesis in Vietnam's governance and technological endeavours. Through this methodological lens, this paper strives to offer a nuanced understanding of the Confucian-Marxist interplay in shaping the contours of Vietnamese statecraft and technological progress.

3. Literature review - Vietnamese scholars on Confucian-Marxist synthesis

The complex and sometimes difficult to navigate landscape of Vietnamese governance and societal structure is a testament to the enduring legacy and dynamic interplay of several cultural and political narratives and among them, above all, Confucian and Marxist ideologies. Naturally, one can argue that other cultural (both religious and philosophical) influences should be added to the mix, namely those of Buddhism, Daoism, and the indigenous Vietnamese Folk religious views and practices. However, to dissect and interpret these influences goes beyond the scope of this paper. Its focus remains on the interplay between Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam. The following literature review introduces in a narrative fashion some of the leading scholarly explorations that trace the contours of history, law, politics, and societal norms.

We will begin with Forkan Ali [2] who offers a panoramic view of the historical and contemporary landscapes shaped by Confucianism in Vietnam. Ali elucidates how, despite the potent forces of Marxism and European colonialism, Confucianism has contributed to moulding the ethos and identity of modern Vietnam. This foundational perspective sets the stage for a deeper understanding of the Confucian underpinnings in Vietnamese culture and governance. Building

on this historical backdrop, Son Bui presents a series of insightful analyses that further dissect the integration of Confucian principles within the Vietnamese governance framework [3-5]. Bui specifically highlights Ho Chi Minh's nuanced engagement with Confucianism, weaving classical Confucian ideals into the very fabric of his governmental vision [4]. This is complemented by Bui's exploration of how Confucian intellectuals championed modern constitutionalism in early twentieth-century Vietnam [3]. Bui's work reveals the fascinating melding of Confucian doctrines with emerging constitutionalist ideals. Extending this discourse, Bui ventures into the realm of imperial Vietnam, revealing how Confucian norms shaped constitutional practices during the early Nguyễn dynasty, serving as ethical guidelines that tempered royal authority [5].

Amidst these discussions on governance and constitutionalism, H.T.T. Ngô, G. Vu and T. Nguyen pivot the focus towards the societal implications of these intertwined ideologies, particularly concerning human rights [1]. Their exploration into the impact of 'Asian Values', deeply rooted in Confucian ideals, sheds light on the interplay between traditional values (grounded in traditional philosophy and religious ideas) and contemporary human rights recognition in Vietnam, suggesting a critical re-evaluation of these traditional norms to enhance human rights frameworks. The influence of Chinese culture through Chinese Confucianism was analysed by T.H.V. Vu [6]. On a parallel note, Nghia Duy Pham examines the legal domain, unravelling the profound influence of Confucianism on Vietnam's legal conceptions [7]. Pham's investigation into the Vietnamese legal system underscores the challenges of reconciling traditional Confucian principles with the adoption of Western legal paradigms, highlighting the tension between historical legacies and modern legal reforms.

Transitioning from legal frameworks to academic realms, Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen and Zhao Yuan Shu provide a compelling analysis of the transformative impact of Marxist methodology on Vietnamese social science research prior to 1986 [8]. Their examination reveals how Marxist ideology catalysed a paradigm shift from conservative (traditional-Confucian) to innovative (modern, i.e. empirical, dialectical materialism) research approaches, marking a pivotal moment in Vietnam's academic evolution. Tuan Nguyen and Anh-Chưởng Bùi further enrich this narrative by exploring the symbolic integration of Chinese script and Confucianism in Vietnam, underscoring the profound influence of Confucian thought on Vietnamese rulers and the political landscape at large [9]. Lastly, Tran and Dang offer a reflective analysis on the philosophical dimensions of Confucianism, particularly its viewpoints on human nature and societal roles [10]. Their insights into the essential characteristics of Confucian philosophy illuminate its enduring relevance in shaping the cultural and spiritual foundations of contemporary Vietnamese society.

As we explored, analysed and tried to make sense (in a synthetic manner) of the existing literature relevant to my research, we became convinced that the existing material highlights the rich historical legacy of these ideologies - one that deserves exploring further. Also, the reviewed literature points towards the

evolving challenges and opportunities as Vietnam navigates its path in the modern world. This is something we wish to focus on in this paper.

4. Historical context and current cultural influences

Confucianism, a philosophical and ethical system originating from ancient China, has profoundly influenced East and Southeast Asian governance, including Vietnam. I have already highlighted Forkan Ali's work [2] that became influential in revealing how Confucian ideals, with their emphasis on social harmony, moral education and meritocracy, have shaped the governance and societal norms across the region. However, in Vietnam, Confucianism was not merely adopted (from China) but adapted, intertwining with local customs, rituals and values to form a unique variant of Confucian thought [2]. Tran and Dang further examine and interpret this evolution. They highlight, among other things, how Vietnam embraced Confucian principles, tailoring them to its societal context and embedded them within its cultural and governance frameworks [10].

The traditional 'Chinese' Confucianism served as a governance tool for feudal dynasties and contributed to the development of an orthodox culture that significantly leaned towards Chinese influences, thereby impacting the spiritual and material aspects of traditional Vietnamese culture in ambiguous (sometimes negative) ways. This led to a gradual weakening of Vietnam, culminating in the country's loss of sovereignty in the mid-19th century. Confucianism's legacy persists in societal norms, for better or worse. Particularly in gender roles and relations, it seems to perpetuate a male-dominant hierarchy and gender inequality that, although less influential now, continues to affect Vietnamese society's development.

The infusion of Marxist ideology provided a new lens through which to view social structures, governance and development, catalysing significant changes in Vietnam's approach to statecraft and societal organization. Unsurprisingly, the integration of Confucian and Marxist ideologies in Vietnam has given rise to a unique governance model, characterized by a blend of traditional values and revolutionary principles. Pham helps us understand this synthesis, particularly in the legal domain, where Confucian principles of moral governance and societal harmony intersect with Marxist ideals of social justice and equity [7]. Bui further explores this integration through the lens of Ho Chi Minh's governance philosophy, which seamlessly wove together Confucian ethics and Marxist-Leninist principles [4]. Ho Chi Minh had a remarkable, unique leadership style. One notable example is Ho Chi Minh's emphasis on 'Moral Example', where he embodied Confucian ideals of virtuous leadership while advocating for Marxist principles of equality and collective welfare [4]. This approach fostered a sense of moral responsibility among leaders and solidarity among the populace, strengthening national unity and social cohesion. The accomplished (although, not perfect) ideological synthesis has imbued Vietnam's governance model with a distinct character, balancing the pursuit of

technological and economic progress with a deep-seated commitment to social harmony, ethical leadership and the collective well-being.

We can complete this section by establishing the following conclusions:

a) There is an enduring influence of Confucian ethics in Vietnamese political leadership and public administration.

Confucian ethics, with its emphasis on virtue, integrity, filial piety, respect for authority, and moral leadership, has long been and continues to be the bedrock of Vietnamese political and administrative realms. Bui confirm this enduring influence, by providing concrete examples of how Confucian virtues influence the moral compass of Vietnamese leaders, fostering a governance model rooted in ethical considerations and the welfare of the populace [3-5]. This ethical framework helps to stabilize the integrity of governance and fosters trust and respect between the government and its citizens [9]. Along with the governing Marxist ideology, it thus forms the backbone of Vietnam's political stability and administrative efficiency.

b) Confucian principles of harmony, hierarchy, and filial (familial) piety play a significant role in shaping Vietnamese state governance.

The Confucian tenets of harmony, hierarchy and filial (familial) piety play a pivotal role in the structural and ideological framework of Vietnamese governance. These principles shape the governance model, emphasizing the importance of social harmony and a well-defined hierarchical order in maintaining societal balance. Son Bui extends this analysis, illustrating how familial piety reinforces the bonds between the state and its citizens, mirroring the respect and loyalty found within a family unit [5]. Nevertheless, there are challenges to be overcome. As Ngô, Vu and Nguyen correctly point out, "The influence of Asian Values, on the recognition of and support for human rights in Vietnam has, however, been largely negative rather than positive, especially in relation to recognising civil and political rights as codified in universal human rights instruments" [1, p. 315]. More deliberation in policy development and implementation is thus needed to reconcile the emerging tensions.

c) The modern relevance of Confucianism in Vietnamese politics and its contribution to societal cohesion and ethical governance.

Despite existing tensions and ambiguities, our research confirms that, in the contemporary political landscape of Vietnam, Confucianism's relevance is not only preserved but recently invigorated. It contributes to societal cohesion and ethical governance. The modern application of Confucian principles fosters a harmonious society, one that values collective well-being over individual interests. This appears to play a significant role in the self-oriented, expressive culture promoted by advertisements and social media. Confucian values inform the ethical underpinnings of Vietnamese politics, promoting a governance model that prioritizes social harmony, moral leadership, and the collective good (i.e. a more balanced view of community and individual needs).

5. Marxism and technological progress

The influence of Marxist ideology on Vietnam's trajectory of technological advancement and societal development is both profound and transformative. This section explores how Marxist perspectives have shaped Vietnam's approach to technology, labour, and capital, fostering an environment where technological innovation is intertwined with socio-economic progress.

Vietnam has leveraged technology to propel social progress and enhance the quality of life for its citizens. However, this is not limited merely to Vietnam's historical experience. Sun elaborates on this theme, highlighting the strategic integration of technological policies within the broader Marxist framework, aimed at achieving not only economic growth but also social equity and development [11]. This holistic approach underscores the belief in technology as a pivotal force for societal transformation, aligning with Marxist principles of progress and equality [11].

Vietnam views technological advancement not just as an economic imperative but also as a crucial equalizer in society. Drawing from the foundational Marxist doctrine of material dialectics, which emphasizes the role of material conditions in shaping societal structures, the Vietnamese government has embarked on programs designed to mitigate socio-economic disparities. Central to this endeavour is addressing the digital divide, a modern manifestation of class distinctions, where access to technology becomes a determinant of social stratification. In alignment with the Marxist principle of addressing inequalities inherent in capitalist systems, the government's initiatives are geared towards democratizing access to technology, ensuring that the fruits of technological advancements are equitably distributed across all socio-economic strata, including rural and historically underserved communities.

This commitment to inclusivity in technological deployment resonates with the Marxist critique of alienation, endeavouring to prevent the alienation of less privileged sectors from the benefits of the digital age. By integrating technological policies with overarching social objectives, the government seeks to transcend mere economic growth, aiming for a holistic societal development that marries infrastructure expansion with substantive improvements in education and healthcare sectors. This approach embodies the Marxist principle of praxis, where theory is actualized through practical action aimed at transforming societal conditions. Initiatives that leverage technology to enhance the quality of education and healthcare services are illustrative of this praxis, embodying the government's dedication to utilizing technological progress as a lever for comprehensive societal upliftment, thereby striving towards the Marxist ideal of a more equitable and just society.

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 has ushered in transformative shifts across the spectrum of Vietnamese societal life, fundamentally reconfiguring the cultural landscape and individual behaviours within this rapidly evolving milieu. This epochal transition has precipitated a profound re-evaluation of living and working environments, modes of communication, and individual comportments,

thereby recalibrating the cultural ethos and interpersonal dynamics that define the Vietnamese collective identity [12]. At the crux of this cultural metamorphosis is the advent of digitalization, which has revolutionized consumption patterns and engendered a paradigmatic shift in consumer behaviour and habits. This digital convergence has catalysed a more inclusive economic participation, yet it concurrently harbours the potential for deepening the digital divide, particularly among rural and marginalized communities, thus necessitating a judicious approach to technological deployment.

The ascendancy of remote work and the ubiquity of digital communication tools have redefined professional and personal interactions, obviating the necessity for physical presence in conventional workspaces and direct interpersonal engagements. While these technological affordances have enhanced operational flexibility and efficiency, they also portend a gradual erosion of community ties and familial bonds, as virtual interactions supplant traditional face-to-face encounters [12]. Moreover, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 has precipitated a clash of cultural paradigms, juxtaposing traditional values and lifestyles against emergent modern norms and practices. This cultural dichotomy, characterized by a tension between the vestiges of the past and the contours of the nascent societal fabric, engenders a milieu rife with contradictions and contestations over cultural authenticity and relevance. The infusion of new cultural elements, while enriching the cultural tapestry, also poses existential threats to the integrity of national cultural identity, prompting introspection on the directionality and ethos of cultural evolution in the face of unrelenting modernization. As Nguyen and Nguyen rightly point out, the cultural and ethical landscape is witnessing a discernible dilution of traditional mores, manifested in the attenuation of standard cultural values and the proliferation of non-cultural and unethical expressions in the public domain [12]. This moral and cultural depreciation, particularly evident in sectors emblematic of Vietnam's revered traditional values such as education and healthcare, underscores the imperative for a recalibration of professional ethos and personal conduct to arrest the decline in cultural and ethical standards.

Innovation, therefore, must be fostered for sustainable development and not just for immediate gains. Sun highlights Vietnam's emphasis on fostering innovation within the technological sphere, guided by the Marxist ethos of collective progress [11]. The government actively supports research and development activities, innovation hubs, and tech start-ups, focusing on sustainable solutions that address both current and future societal challenges. In addition, it ensures that technological advancements contribute to sustainable development goals, aligning economic interests with environmental and social sustainability. But there is another element that needs to be added into the equation, namely an intentional promotion of technological literacy and participation. Understanding the transformative potential of technology, Vietnam places a strong emphasis on technological literacy and participation among its citizens. Through educational reforms and public campaigns, the government encourages the acquisition of digital skills across all age groups and social strata

[13]. This democratization of technological knowledge empowers citizens to actively participate in the digital economy, contributing to a more vibrant, innovative, and inclusive technological ecosystem.

In line with Marxist principles, Vietnam utilizes technology to enhance social welfare programs, ensuring that the most vulnerable populations are not left behind. What follows are the six main principles that our research has discerned pertaining to the potential and right use of technology.

1. **Social welfare enhancement**: The principle of using technology to bolster social welfare programs reflects the Marxist commitment to social equity. This involves ensuring that technology serves as a tool to uplift the most vulnerable segments of society, aligning with the Marxist ethos of prioritizing the needs of the proletariat and marginalized populations.

2. **Technology as an equalizer**: The concept of technology acting as an equalizer is rooted in the Marxist principle of addressing and reducing social and economic disparities. By employing technology to level the playing field, Vietnam is adhering to Marxist ideals of creating a more equitable society where access to resources and opportunities is not determined by social or economic status.

3. **Integration of technological policies with social objectives**: The holistic integration of technological policies with broader social objectives embodies the Marxist principle of dialectical materialism, where societal progress is achieved through the practical application of ideological principles. This approach ensures that technological advancements contribute positively to societal development and are not pursued for their own sake or for mere economic gain.

4. **Innovation for sustainable development**: Fostering innovation with an emphasis on sustainable development reflects the Marxist understanding of historical materialism, where societal change is driven by the material conditions of life. By promoting technological innovations that address both current and future societal needs, Vietnam is applying Marxist principles to ensure that development is sustainable and benefits future generations.

5. **Promotion of technological literacy**: Encouraging technological literacy among the populace aligns with the Marxist principle of empowering the working class through education and knowledge. By equipping citizens with digital skills, Vietnam is enhancing their ability to participate fully in the socio-economic life of the country, thereby democratizing access to technology and its benefits.

6. **Leveraging technology for social welfare**: The use of technology to enhance the efficiency and reach of social welfare initiatives directly correlates with the Marxist principle of the state's role in ensuring the well-being of its citizens. By leveraging digital tools and platforms to facilitate access to social services, Vietnam is embodying the Marxist ideal of a state that actively works to improve the living conditions of its people.

5.1. **The interplay between technology, labour, and capital in Vietnamese Marxist theory and practice**

Marxist ideology provides a robust framework for guiding technological innovation in Vietnam, with a keen focus on addressing socio-economic disparities. Technological advancements must remain accessible to all segments of society, thereby promoting equitable growth and development. These guiding principles reflect a deep-seated commitment to leveraging technology as a means to uplift the populace and bridge socio-economic divides, resonating with the core tenets of Marxist thought. By adopting Marxist perspectives on technology, labour and capital, and by guiding technological innovation with a focus on addressing disparities, Vietnam exemplifies a model where technological advancement goes hand in hand with social equity and inclusive growth. "The 2013 Constitution has taken a step towards a free market economy by recognizing the decisive role of the market in the national economy. It emphasizes the importance of the private sector and promises that it will be treated fairly among all other economic sectors." [13] On the other hand, as Pham correctly observes, "in line with the socialist ideology adopted by its predecessors, the 2013 Constitution reaffirms the dominance of the public sector and the leading role of state-owned enterprises, and preserves the … 'ownership of the entire Vietnamese people of land and natural resources'" [13].

6. Integration of Confucianism and Marxism in governance

The unique governance framework of Vietnam represents an innovative synthesis of Confucian moral governance and Marxist social justice principles, creating a model that intertwines traditional ethics with modern socio-political ideals. Of course, there are both challenges and opportunities ensuing from the interplay between traditional Vietnamese social norms, particularly those stemming from an agricultural society, and the formal legal frameworks influenced by Confucian and Marxist ideologies [7]. What follows are five distinct areas that emerged from my research.

1. **Influence of agricultural social norms**: The enduring social norms originating from Vietnam's predominantly agricultural society have a profound impact on contemporary legal practices and governance. These norms, characterized by collectivism, the rule of causality, endurance, consensus and respect for elders, align with and are reinforced by Confucian values, emphasizing the importance of understanding these indigenous norms to comprehend current legal practices.

2. **Challenges of legal harmonization**: The process of integrating Western legal concepts, such as limited liability in corporate law, into the Vietnamese legal system highlights the complexities of legal harmonization in a society where traditional norms and values continue to hold sway. This underscores the necessity of acknowledging and respecting the cultural and historical context in which laws are applied.

3. **Role of Confucianism in contemporary society**: The resurgence of interest in Confucianism, as indicated by the works of scholars like Kim Dinh [14, 15], Vu Khieu [16], and Phan Dai Doan [17], points to a potential shift in public opinion and academic discourse towards recognizing the relevance of Confucian values in modern Vietnamese society. This revival suggests that Confucianism, with its emphasis on ethical conduct, community responsibility, and social harmony, remains a significant influence on Vietnamese social norms and legal conceptions.

4. **Comparative perspective with other Asian societies**: The experiences of other Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and China, in integrating traditional values with contemporary legal and economic development, provide a comparative framework for analysing Vietnam's journey. This comparison yields insights into how Vietnam can protect and promote its traditional legal conceptions while adopting Western legal models [7].

5. **Educational and scholarly perspectives**: The influence of Vietnamese legal education, shaped by textbooks and curricula grounded in Marxist theory, on the perception and practice of law highlights the gap between traditional legal traditions and contemporary legal scholarship. This educational approach, with its focus on the Marxist interpretation of legal development, contributes to a lack of familiarity with Vietnam's own legal traditions among scholars and practitioners.

The practical application of the Confucian-Marxist governance model in Vietnam is exemplified through various contemporary economic reforms and the emphasis on social equity in development projects. Policies are designed to address material needs and foster social cohesion and mutual support, resonating with Confucian ideals of familial piety and community care. The convergence plays out in the education sector as well. The fusion of Confucian and Marxist values informs educational policies and practices, aiming to create not only academically competent but also morally upright citizens. This approach extends to public administration, where the emphasis on ethical governance and social justice ensures transparency, efficiency, and equity in public services, reflecting the harmonious coalescence of traditional and modern governance principles. The integration of Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnamese governance presents arguably a compelling model of how ancient wisdom can harmonize with contemporary socio-political ideals to create a governance framework that is both morally grounded and socially equitable.

7. Confucianism, Marxism and technological ethics

The intersection of Confucianism, Marxism and technological ethics in Vietnam presents a compelling framework for understanding the ethical implications of technological innovation and its integration into society. This section explores the ethical considerations that guide technological innovation,

the balance between technological progress and societal values, and the role of the Vietnamese state in ensuring technology serves the common good.

From a Confucian-Marxist perspective, technological innovation in Vietnam is not merely a pursuit of economic growth but is imbued with deep ethical considerations. It is of utmost importance that scholars and relevant public authorities examine how these ethical considerations are integrated into the development and deployment of new technologies. Their task is to ensure that innovations contribute positively to societal harmony and individual as well as communal well-being. Sun's research is a helpful steppingstone, as it elaborates on the strategic alignment of existing technological policies with the broader Confucian-Marxist ethical framework, which emphasizes the moral responsibilities of innovators and the state in guiding technological development [11]. This approach ensures that technological advancements are not only economically beneficial but also ethically sound, socially responsible and long-term sustainable.

Of course, the power and significance of technology should not be underestimated or disregarded. In the context of Vietnam's rapid economic transformation, technology has emerged as a pivotal force shaping labour relations and capital distribution. The country's integration into the global economy has been significantly influenced by technological advancements, as highlighted in a report by the World Bank (2018) [18]. Moreover, the resurgence of the Vietnam IT sector has been instrumental in driving the nation's technological renaissance, as underscored in the article 'Explore the Power of Vietnam Technology' from Saigon Technology [https://saigontechnology.com/blog/vietnam-technology#:~:text=The%20Vietnam%20IT%20sector%20has,in%20the%20country's%20IT%20renaissance]. This trend resonates with scholarly discourse on the nexus between technology, labour markets, and income distribution, as evidenced in works such as 'Technology and the Future of Work' [IMF, 2018, https://www.imf.org/external/np/g20/pdf/2018/041118.pdf] and 'Technical Change, Inequality, and the Labour Market' by Acemoglu [19]. The digitalization of work extends beyond the confines of the ICT industry to encompass a diverse array of occupations reliant on digital skills, as elucidated in the publication 'Digitalization and Employment: A Review' [International Labour Organization, 2022, 15-22, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_854353.pdf].

In what follows, is the summary of the roles that Technology is playing in shaping labour relations and capital distribution in Vietnam along with some preliminary recommendations as to how to approach these issues.

7.1. Impacts on labour

- *Job displacement*: Automation and digitalization are replacing low-skilled jobs in manufacturing and agriculture, potentially leading to unemployment and income inequality.

- *New skill demands*: Technology creates new jobs requiring digital literacy and technical skills, widening the skill gap and potentially worsening income inequality for those without access to training.
- *Flexible work arrangements*: The rise of the gig economy and remote work opportunities offer flexibility but might come with less job security and social protection.

7.2. Impacts on capital distribution

- *Increased capital concentration*: Technology platforms and data-driven businesses can lead to winner-take-all markets, concentrating wealth in the hands of a few.
- *Investment in innovation*: Technology advancements require significant capital investment, potentially widening the gap between large corporations and smaller businesses.
- *Opportunities for inclusive growth*: Technology can also create new investment and job opportunities in diverse sectors, promoting inclusive economic growth if harnessed effectively.

7.3. Social and cultural context

- *Strong social capital*: Vietnam's emphasis on family and community networks can play a crucial role in supporting workers through job transitions and skill development.
- *Government policies*: Effective government policies on education, training, social safety nets, and regulations are crucial to mitigate negative impacts and ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of technological progress.

Hence, we remain convinced that technology presents both challenges and opportunities for labour relations and capital distribution in Vietnam. We need to adopt a multi-pronged approach that addresses skill development, social protection, and inclusive growth strategies. To achieve this, I propose an inclusive, culturally sensitive approach that takes seriously Vietnam's Confucian legacy as it strives to reign in technological development. After all, as I have shown above, in the Vietnamese context, striking a balance between technological progress and the preservation of societal values and human well-being is paramount.

There are several remarkable ancient Confucian texts offering insights that we can employ in our deliberation. Namely, the famous parable from 'Nan Hua Jing' can provide a philosophical lens through which to examine the interplay between technology, ethics and governance. It encourages a reflective inquiry into how Vietnam, guided by the integrated principles of Confucianism and Marxism, can navigate the complexities of modernization while staying true to the essence of ethical governance and the pursuit of harmony within the fabric of society. In the seminal text 'Nan Hua Jing' by Chuang Tzu, an intriguing narrative unfolds that contrasts human endeavours with mechanical inventions,

through the experiences of Zi Gong, a disciple of Confucius [20]. Encountering an elderly gardener toiling to water his crops, Zi Gong proposes a mechanical solution to ease the labour. The gardener's retort underscores a profound philosophical stance: the adoption of complex mechanisms may inadvertently lead to the erosion of one's intrinsic purity and tranquillity, thereby distancing oneself from the Dao, or the ultimate existential truth. This allegory accentuates the Daoist perspective, which finds echo on Confucian thought as well, that true harmony and enlightenment stem from an internal state of simplicity and alignment with the natural order, rather than from reliance on external technological aids. The gardener's refusal to adopt the mechanized method, despite recognizing its efficiency, reflects a deliberate choice to preserve the sanctity of the Dao within the human spirit, highlighting the inherent value of maintaining one's connection to the natural and the transcendental over the allure of technological convenience.

This parable, illustrating the gardener's preference for manual labour over mechanical irrigation despite its inefficiency, serves as a metaphor for the delicate balance between technological advancement and the preservation of ethical and philosophical principles. In our context of inquiry, this Daoist perspective can be juxtaposed with the Confucian and Marxist ideologies to underscore the importance of maintaining ethical integrity and simplicity in the face of technological progress. The gardener's adherence to the Dao, favouring purity and tranquillity over convenience, can be analogized to the need for modern governance to remain grounded in ethical principles, even as it embraces technological innovation. This is very much in line with the Confucian emphases. Moreover, the narrative can be employed to critique the potential for technology to distance individuals and societies from their core values and natural harmony, echoing concerns about the impact of rapid technological advancements on social equity and individual well-being. It can serve as a cautionary tale, reminding policymakers and technologists of the need to ensure that technological progress does not come at the expense of ethical considerations and the spiritual well-being of the populace. Furthermore, the gardener's wisdom can inspire a discussion on the role of technology in society from a Confucian-Marxist perspective, advocating for a balanced approach where technology is harnessed to enhance societal welfare and promote equitable development, without undermining the intrinsic values of simplicity, harmony and ethical integrity.

Moreover, the Confucian doctrine of the unity of Heaven and man provides a profound and existentially relevant philosophical framework that can be thoughtfully integrated into our analysis of governance and technological ethics in the Vietnamese context. This doctrine, which perceives human nature as inherently intertwined with the divine essence of Heaven or Nature, underscores the importance of aligning human actions with the natural and transcendent orders [20, p. 117]. This Confucian principle can be employed to critique and reflect upon the ethical implications of rapid technological advancements, such as those envisioned by extreme attempts to merge modern

technology with human bodies and minds (such as transhumanism or posthumanism). Such attempts might conflict with the Confucian reverence for the natural order and the divine endowment of human nature. By invoking the Confucian ideal of harmonizing human endeavours with the laws of Heaven and Nature, current policy makers can explore how Vietnamese governance, influenced by Confucian and Marxist principles, navigates the ethical quandaries presented by such futuristic technologies. Vietnamese policy-making has so far prioritized technological innovations that align with the natural order and enhance human well-being, while eschewing those that disrupt the harmony between Heaven and man. Given the strong Confucian ethos, this approach is not likely to change any time soon. Moreover, the Confucian emphasis on deference to celestial edicts can serve as a philosophical underpinning for advocating a more cautious and ethical approach to technological development. It encourages a governance model that seeks to harness the benefits of technology for societal progress and which, at the same time, ensures that such progress does not compromise the intrinsic values of human nature and the reverence for the natural world.

There is a need for collaborative efforts between the state, society and technological sectors to create an ecosystem where technology is developed and used in ways that are beneficial to all members of society. This collaborative approach ensures that technological innovations are not solely driven by market forces; they must also be shaped by ethical considerations, social needs, and the collective aspirations of the Vietnamese people. Therefore, we propose the creation of a public-academic platform where ideas could be discussed from various perspectives and where all stakeholders of the process would contribute. The results could be synthetized by a group of experts and made available as a policy advice or 'feedback information' for academicians and policy makers.

On the other hand, we do not hide that there are tensions and inconsistencies. While the Confucian-Marxist synthesis offers a compelling framework for governance in Vietnam, it is not without its challenges and critiques. For example, we have concerns regarding the compatibility of Confucian hierarchical structures with Marxist ideals of equality and classlessness. Praxis has shown that the synthesis may lead to ideological inconsistencies in policy and practice. In addition, challenges persevere in balancing the collective ethos of Marxism with the individual moral and ethical cultivation emphasized in Confucianism. These critical issues highlight the complex task of reconciling the differing philosophical underpinnings of Confucianism and Marxism within the context of modern governance.

Moreover, the rapid advancement of technology in Vietnam introduces potential conflicts between traditional Confucian values and modern technological paradigms. Here we may point out the tension between the preservation of traditional ethics and the adoption of progressive technological innovations, which challenges established social norms and ethical frameworks. This is particularly true in the realm of digital culture and social media, where the open exchange of ideas may clash with Confucian ideals of harmony and

respect for authority. Therefore, addressing critiques related to ideological conflicts, implementing the model within a diverse society, and reconciling traditional values with modern technological advancements are crucial for the continued success and evolution of this governance framework. These challenges necessitate ongoing dialogue, flexibility and innovation to ensure that governance remains effective, inclusive, and aligned with the aspirations of the Vietnamese people.

8. Conclusion and future prospects

Our research into the interplay between Confucian and Marxist ideologies within the Vietnamese governance framework, with a particular focus on its ramifications for technological progress and societal development, is far from complete. However, it constitutes a solid ground for future reflections and provides a clearer foundation for understanding this complex subject. Above all, the unique synthesis of Confucian and Marxist ideologies within Vietnamese historical experience and contemporary governance offers useful insights for addressing the challenges of the modern era. This fusion, embodying the ethical depth of Confucianism and the socio-economic insights of Marxism, provides a robust framework for addressing contemporary global issues, adapting to the digital age, and engaging in international cooperation. Such an integrated approach can help fostering ethical, equitable, and innovative governance. This synthesis has not only shaped the moral and ethical underpinnings of Vietnamese policy-making but has also catalysed a distinctive technological ethos that prioritizes societal welfare and inclusivity.

Vietnam's Confucian-Marxist governance model holds significant promise in tackling pressing global challenges such as climate change and technological disruption. The ethical considerations and community-oriented principles inherent in Confucianism, combined with Marxism's emphasis on social equity and justice, create a powerful lens through which to view and address these issues. Another challenge stems from the complexities of the digital age. The adaptation of Confucian-Marxist principles to this new era presents both challenges and opportunities. Policy-makers will need to become more intentional and comprehensive fostering a digital culture that aligns with Confucian values of harmony and respect, while also embracing the egalitarian ethos of Marxism. This adaptation involves the integration of advanced technologies into governance and societal structures but also the cultivation of digital literacy and ethics that reflect the core principles of Confucianism and Marxism. By doing so, Vietnam can harness the potential of digital innovations to enhance governance, education, healthcare, and social services, ensuring that the digital revolution contributes to a more equitable and harmonious society.

The Vietnamese experience with Confucian-Marxist governance also underscores the importance of international cooperation in promoting a balanced approach to governance and technology. Vietnam's engagement with global partners helps to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices in ethical

governance, sustainable development, and technological innovation. This collaborative approach enriches Vietnam's own governance model and contributes to the global discourse on creating governance frameworks that are both technologically advanced and ethically grounded.

However, the journey of harmonizing Confucianism and Marxism within the Vietnamese context is fraught with complexities and challenges. The tension between traditional hierarchies and Marxist egalitarianism, the reconciliation of individual ethical cultivation with collective social ethos, and the adaptation of traditional values in the face of rapid technological changes pose significant dilemmas. These challenges underscore the dynamic nature of this ideological synthesis, necessitating a continuous process of negotiation, adaptation, and innovation. As we look towards the future, several avenues for further research emerge from this study. First, a deeper investigation into the impacts of this ideological synthesis on Vietnam's international relations and global diplomacy could offer insights into its external ramifications. Second, the evolving role of digital culture and social media within this governance framework warrants closer scrutiny, especially in light of the tensions between traditional ethics and modern technological paradigms. Third, the potential for this Confucian-Marxist model to inform global governance strategies in the digital era presents an intriguing research prospect, inviting comparative analyses with other governance models.

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